

## Briefing Statement

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**Bureau:** National Park Service  
**Issue:** White-tailed Deer Management  
**Park Site:** Valley Forge National Historical Park  
**Date:** January 8, 2007

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### Background:

- Valley Forge National Historical Park (NHP), an administrative unit of the national park system, is located near King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. The park, designated by Congress on July 4, 1976, consists of 3,466 acres.
- White-tailed deer population monitoring between 1997 and 2006 indicates an increase in deer density from 154 to 244 deer per square mile within Valley Forge NHP. Current deer density is approximately 14 times greater than the state's recommended deer density to maintain forest regeneration.
- In 2000, Congress directed the NPS to develop a plan to address the issue of deer management at Valley Forge NHP. The 2006 House Appropriations report reaffirmed this directive:

*“The public has been patient as the NPS has worked through its process in regard to management of the over-abundance of white-tailed deer at the park. Within existing funds, NPS is directed to begin the environmental impact statement for deer management. The Committee expects that the plan will be funded fully so that it can be completed in fiscal year 2008. The Committee further expects that implementation of the selected action will begin immediately upon signing of the Record of Decision.”*

- The National Park Service has begun preparation of a white-tailed deer management plan and environmental impact statement for Valley Forge NHP. The Notice of Intent, a requirement of the *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) and the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality, was published in the Federal Register. Internal scoping to develop the purpose, need for action, objectives, and preliminary management strategies was completed. The initial public scoping period ended on December 8, 2006 with formal public scoping meetings held November 8 and 9, 2006. The results of public scoping are currently being summarized.

### Current Status:

- The substantial increase in deer population size within Valley Forge NHP over the last two decades seems to correlate with significant changes in the species composition, abundance and distribution of native plant communities and alteration of natural processes such as forest regeneration.
- The purpose of this plan/EIS is to develop a deer management strategy that supports long-term protection, preservation, and restoration of native vegetation and other natural and cultural resources.
- A deer management plan is needed at this time because: (1) An increasing number of deer over the past two decades has resulted in undersirable changes in the species composition, structure, abundance, and distribution of native plant communities and associated wildlife; and (2) Browsing of tree and shrub seedlings by deer will prevent the ability of native forests to grow and mature.

- Preliminary alternatives were developed during an internal scoping meeting and include: existing management (no action), fencing of targeted vegetation communities, lethal reduction with firearms by specially trained professionals, reproductive control, and lethal reduction without firearms by specially trained professionals.
- The deer management plan will be informed by and consistent with the ongoing General Management Plan process.

**Communications:**

- Information will be available for public review and comment at local public libraries, the park Web site (<http://www.nps.gov/vafo>), and the Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) Web site (<http://parkplanning.nps.gov>).

**Congressional Districts:**

Pennsylvania:

Jim Gerlach – 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District  
Joe Sestak – 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District

Bob Casey – U.S. Senate  
Arlen Specter – U.S. Senate

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